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## KOREAN CLAN ORGANIZATION

By WALTER HOUGH

The following information concerning the Korean family or survival of the clan was elicited during several conversations with an intelligent Korean, Mr Kiu Beung Surh, who is receiving his education in the United States. The strength of a clan organization in an ancient country like Korea, which has long possessed a general scheme of government, is interesting.

*Clan Head and Council Delegates.*—The head of the clan (family) is the direct male descendant of the ancestor by primogeniture. The government of the clan is by the head (*chong son*, "direct descendant") and a council elected by groups of the family in various parts of the country. The head of each family group becomes such by nearness to the line of descent, by age, or ability.

The delegates to the clan council, which is held usually in Seoul, are elected by ballot, viva voce, or by appointment by the local head. Only one delegate is sent from each village, and his expenses are borne by the group. Others may go, however, if they defray their own expenses. In case no delegate is sent, the head imposes a fine. The head also levies a tax or assessment on the members of the clan. This tax is not uniform, but is fixed in accordance with the means of the individual. The money collected is paid to the keeper of the central clan meeting-house (*ta tchong ka*, "great family house," the word *tchong* meaning blood relationship or brother). The tax is applied by the keeper, under direction of the council, toward keeping up the ancestral tombs, shrines, and sacrifices, to investment in land, etc., and to the maintenance of such land and the clan house.

The revenues of the clan lands are also applied to meet expenses. The keeper usually farms the clan lands, and his services are therefore remunerated.

*Meeting-place of the Council.*—The clan house may be situated in any part of the country, but usually it is located at the capital. The care of the house devolves on the keeper, who is not necessarily a member of the clan.

*Business of the Council.*—Meetings are called on many matters connected with the interests of the clan, such as the death of a prominent member, congratulations on the advancement of members of the clan, questions relating to burial grounds over which disputes may arise, or for the expulsion of members from the clan, etc.

*Burial Grounds.*—It should be explained that the clan cemetery is located at one place, to which the remains of all deceased members are taken for interment. The tombs of the ancestors are kept in repair by the clan, each existing family unit caring for the graves of its own immediate dead. In case of the decline or extinction of a family, the clan provides for the care of the tombs. The selection of a cemetery in Korea is a complicated proceeding, and is the result of a great deal of research by an "earth doctor," who chooses a place free from evil influences (*feng shui* of the Chinese) by means of geomancy. This earth doctor is an important personage, as he is supposed to be familiar with the place-spirits and earth-spirits, which among primitive peoples are believed to vivify inanimate matter. The graveyards are located usually in the mountains, and they form one of the chief obstacles to mining or railroad enterprises, so great is their number and extent.

If a clan should wish to buy a portion of the unoccupied burial ground of another clan and be refused, secret burials are sometimes made on such land. The removal of these intrusive remains has often led to friction between the clans, for interments of this kind are believed to affect the fecundity of the clan.

It is said that when a marriage is not fruitful the matter is brought before the council and inquiry is made, especially if the complainants are wealthy, as to whether the ground is inviolate.

A few Buddhists burn their dead. The usual Korean method is to bury at full length, in the customary clothes, and to wrap the body in coarse hemp cloth before placing it in a coffin. Often the dead are required to be carried long distances to the clan graveyard. Over the grave a mound of earth is heaped up, and this is soon covered with short, velvety grass.

*Laws of the Clan.*—The prohibition of marriages between members of the same clan name, which seems to be a world-wide custom, is a prominent feature of Korean sociology. It is more than a law with penalty for infraction; it is a traditional custom of which the negative is inconceivable. The civil law against remarriage by a widow is said to have originated in the necessity of prohibiting the doing away of one husband with the view of taking another. The marriage of a deceased wife's sister is no more to be thought of in Korea than is marriage within the clan.

*Offences and Penalties.*—The clan laws take cognizance of three or more offences against the clan and prescribe the punishment therefor. If a member becomes a traitor against his country he is expelled from the clan and thereafter forbidden to use the clan surname. This penalty is more severe than may appear at a glance, because it amounts to excommunication from the ancestors, and ancestral worship is the central idea of the clan. Another offence is illicit intercourse between families, which strikes at the root of the clan marriage system. This offence may be punished within the clan, but if it becomes known the civil authorities take cognizance of it. The clan penalty is excommunication.

The third major offence is disrespect to parents or to old people. This infraction is usually corrected by the clan, but when the offence is glaring or repeated, it is punished by civil law.

*Support of Poor Members.*—In countries like China and Korea where filial piety and respect for the aged are inculcated (this, however, apparently within the clan), the support of poor members of the clan does not often require attention. The support and succor of indigent or unfortunate members by the clan seem not to be obligatory, nor do they appear to be a part of the system of coöperation, but are effected through charity. No doubt the claims of relationship are strong enough to be the moving factor in all such cases.

*Adoption.*—Korean families are prevented from becoming extinct by the custom of adoption. The rule followed is that a child of a younger generation is selected and one not in the line of descent; that is, the second male child may be adopted. The adoption of female children is rare.

Thus, perhaps, the claims of great antiquity made by some clans may not be out of reason, as that of the Kim and Ye clans of Wo Sing in Ping Yang, whose descent is said to be traceable through a period extending over four thousand years. Curiously, also, the Korean clans still live in the definite localities where they originated.

*Political Parties.*—The political parties which divide Korea and which at present are those of the North, South, East, and West, involve the clans on account of the localization of the latter. Clans, however, are often divided in political opinions, but this exerts no influence on their organization as a consanguineal group.

The following list of family names comprises the most important in Korea. While some of the names are taken from natural objects, no totemic devices survive according to my informant. As is customary in business, however, the clans have seals, or rather the head of the family uses his seal by virtue of descent. As is the case with the family names, none of the seals bear totemic devices.

## KOREAN FAMILY NAMES

## SANG YUK SEUNG OR "SIX HIGH FAMILY NAMES"

- |               |             |                 |  |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------|--|
| 1. Ye .....   | Plum        | 4. Ahn .....    | Peace                                  |
| 2. Kim .....  | Gold        | 5. Cheung ..... | Ancient nation                         |
| 3. Chai ..... | Precipitous | 6. Pak .....    | Dwarf nettle ( <i>Cecis sinensis</i> ) |

## HA YUK SEUNG OR "SIX LOW FAMILY NAMES"

- |               |                        |               |                         |
|---------------|------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Ta .....   | Great                  | 4. Chu .....  | Autumn                  |
| 2. Pi .....   | Hide or skin           | 5. Cha .....  | Cart or wheeled vehicle |
| 3. Pang ..... | Name of a feudal state | 6. Reum ..... | Humble and wise         |

## OTHER FAMILY NAMES

- |  |                   |                                       |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Surh or Söh. Slow  | Wan .....         | A long robe                           |
| Peun ..... Frontier  | Ur .....          | Fish                                  |
| Meung ..... Bright   | Ha .....          | Milky-way                             |
| Wang ..... King  | Song .....        | Name of a dynasty                     |
| Ye ..... Pear tree   | Ruk .....         | Dry land in contrast to water         |
| Mun ..... Literary   | Yeur .....        | A musical pipe                        |
| Chun ..... Heaven  | Poong .....       | Water sprout                          |
| Chun ..... Thousand  | Mya .....         | A sorceress                           |
| Yong ..... Dragon  | Ma .....          | A horse. A knight in Korean chess     |
| Poung ..... "Son of the Heavenly bird"   | Goo .....         | Implements                            |
| No ..... Mule  | Ham .....         | All, entire                           |
| Ho ..... Door  | Han .....         | An ancient nation                     |
| Chung ..... One of the ten stems   | Rim .....         | Forest                                |
| Heun ..... Black   | Charng .....      | Publish                               |
| Go ..... High or lofty   | Pum .....         | Plant, grass                          |
| Hor ..... Promise or permit  | Pai .....         | Long robe                             |
| Kang ..... The name of an emperor (B.C. 2838), Sin Nong, the inventor of agriculture | Parn .....        | Rice water                            |
| Min ..... Mourn or grieve  | Parn ..... Square |                                       |
| Yu ..... Willow tree   | Peun .....        | Rule                                  |
| Yu ..... The name of an ancient principality   | Sung .....        | Finished or complete                  |
| Päk ..... White  | Sim .....         | A name of a state                     |
| Höng ..... A flood, overflowing  | Sin .....         | Messenger                             |
| Um ..... Prince-like   | Sin .....         | Acid or bitter                        |
| Kwun ..... Power   | Cheun .....       | Perfect                               |
| Cho ..... An ancient nation  | Nam .....         | South                                 |
| Wu ..... An ancient nation   | Quak .....        | An outer fortification                |
| Wu ..... A thong of leather  | Gun .....         | To direct                             |
| Oh ..... Name of ancient nation  | Woo .....         | A name for King U who lived 2200 B.C. |
| Sök ..... Ancient  | Nam-Koong ..      | South palace                          |
| Sök ..... Stone  | Neuk .....        | A surname                             |
| Wan ..... Chief  | Ro .....          | Name of a wild tribe                  |
|  | Gin .....         | To marshal                            |